



# Massachusetts

## New Americans Agenda







*Produced by*



## **The Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants**

**October 1, 2009**

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Massachusetts Office for  
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& Refugee Advocacy Coalition

# Massachusetts New Americans Agenda

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# Massachusetts New Americans Agenda Executive Summary

Immigrants in Massachusetts represent over 14% of the state's population and an even larger portion of the Massachusetts workforce.<sup>1</sup> By 2004, immigrants accounted for 1 in 6 of all workers in the Commonwealth.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, immigrants make up over 21.6 percent of the crucial younger labor force, aged 21-44, necessary to drive the Massachusetts economy and generate new growth.<sup>3</sup>

Massachusetts has come to depend on the growth of its immigrant populations to maintain its population size and economic prosperity. Massachusetts benefits economically, culturally, and civically from the full inclusion of immigrants. The New Americans Agenda (NAA) project reflects the desire of the Commonwealth to better understand the benefits and needs of immigrants and their communities and to develop or promote improved state policies that emphasize their integration.

Initiated by Governor Patrick with Executive Order 503 as the immigrant population of the Commonwealth is about to reach 1 million people, the value of moving past the media debates about national admission policy and status into an intentional state strategy of inclusion is timely and critical to the civic and economic future of the state. Good public policy aims at the well-being of all residents and can be a vital tool in fostering a positive climate for newcomer and settled communities alike in Massachusetts.

The first phase of the project, as stated by the Executive Order, calls for the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants (GAC) to deliver a set of policy recommendations to the Governor to better integrate immigrants and refugees into the civic and economic life of the Commonwealth. The GAC, a voluntary advisory body established by state law in 1986 and whose membership is appointed by the Governor, is comprised of immigrants, business leaders, academics, policy experts and representatives from several state agencies and secretariats that affect or serve significant foreign-born populations.

This report contains the final recommendations from the first phase of the New Americans Agenda project. The information for the NAA recommendations came from three primary sources:

1. *A series of public meetings across the state— regional meetings attended by more than 1,200 individuals were held in Chelsea, Hyannis, New Bedford, Lowell, Springfield, and Fitchburg;*
2. *A series of policy meetings— in which over 175 state agency staff, community experts, and policy professionals met for two rounds of discussions about immigrant integration. The topics included public safety, housing, youth, health, economic/workforce development, education, and civil rights;*

3. *Existing literature and research— including demographic and academic studies, other statewide integration initiatives in the United States, and relevant statistical information.*

Governor Patrick chose to launch the project as an integration initiative in recognition of the important two-way exchange that integration represents. Integration is a process in which both newcomers and welcoming communities share responsibilities and benefits. Immigrants bring economic, cultural, and social contributions to the Commonwealth; in turn the Commonwealth offers opportunities for education, healthcare, and economic advancement. These mutual benefits provide an incentive to promote integration for the benefit of the Commonwealth and all of its residents.

The recommendations in this report are organized in twelve topic areas and presented in order of importance determined by the members of the GAC: Civil Rights, Adult English Language Proficiency, Economic Development, Education, Public Safety, Employment and Workforce Development, Access to State Services, Citizenship Assistance, Health, Refugees, Youth, and Housing and Community Development. The recommendations aim to improve state policies and programs as they relate to access, inclusion and opportunity for all immigrants in each of the topic areas, as well as to increase awareness and understanding of these issues across state government.

All of the recommendations included in this report are vital to the full integration of immigrants into the civic and economic life of the Commonwealth. However, there are certain broad areas which form the foundation for all other integration successes. The GAC views these areas as the very essence of integration. In that spirit, the GAC affirms the central importance of:

- **English language acquisition as the basis for full participation in all aspects of American life;**
- **Basic and advanced education for children and adults and assistance for those already possessing professional credentials as a means of unlocking the potential of every resident in the Commonwealth;**
- **Access to a full range of state services to ensure the support and success of all immigrants;**
- **Protection from discrimination to preserve the rights and freedoms of all.**

These broad areas are crucial to secure the success of the important recommendations listed throughout this report. As a whole, these policy recommendations seek a climate shift that cumulatively demonstrates a commitment to the foreign born residents of Massachusetts which has the ultimate benefit of fostering a society of inclusion, respect, and cultural richness.



# Report Input

Sources and Information



## **Research**

From in-state and out of state including studies, reports and recommendations

## **Policy Meetings**

Specific topics discussed with community members, state agency staff, and policy experts



## **Public Meetings**

Regional meetings were held in Springfield, Fitchburg, New Bedford, Lowell, Hyannis, and Chelsea. Over 1200 people attended to give opinions and list important issues

# Introduction

## Integration

### Challenges and Opportunities

The purpose of the New Americans Agenda is to recommend ways to better integrate immigrants and refugees into the civic and economic life of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Integration, the combining of separate components into a harmonious whole, is fundamental to the success of the Commonwealth and the nation. Our society's ability to peacefully absorb newcomers and to encourage their full engagement as workers, neighbors, and citizens is the basis for our national history of regeneration, innovation, growth, and prosperity. The importance of an integration focus on immigrant issues is that integration represents a two-way commitment with the host community and the newcomer populations agreeing to work together to create a more prosperous future and a healthier, more secure Commonwealth.

Integration is an important goal for both partners but it faces many challenges. The most evident is the rise of virulent anti-immigrant rhetoric in the country. Although most Americans agree that immigrants are valuable assets to local communities, a small minority of individuals feel that America should no longer be a nation open to immigrants. These anti-immigrant voices have created a poisonous atmosphere around the immigration debate and unfortunately have often overwhelmed legitimate public discussions on flow, status, and the best way to incorporate newcomers.

Another important challenge to integration is the current need for comprehensive federal immigration reform. In the absence of reform that establishes clearer pathways for legalization and citizenship for millions of immigrants currently in the United States, true integration will continue to remain an elusive goal for many who risk further marginalization in our society— a situation which bears no benefits for either the immigrant or our larger society.

A third notable challenge to integration that is unique to our Commonwealth is the great diversity of the Massachusetts immigrant population. Unlike many other states, which are home to immigrants from one or two primary countries of origin, immigrants in the Commonwealth represent dozens of different nationalities; in Boston alone residents speak over 140 languages.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Massachusetts attracts immigrants from very diverse educational, occupational, and cultural backgrounds. Immigrants in Massachusetts are both more likely to hold an advanced degree than the native born population and less likely to have a high school diploma.<sup>5</sup>

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Massachusetts immigrants also live in a wide variety of geographic locations, from densely populated cities, to the fast-growing suburban tracts in Boston's metro west region, even into the state's remote rural areas, including the Berkshire Mountain region. Some communities have a rich tradition of immigration but face difficult adjustments to a new economy; others are new to immigrant arrivals and wary of cultural and demographic shifts. These differences of history, location, and circumstance bring unique challenges to the work of integration and a reminder that the needs and strengths of immigrants are not uniform but vary widely across the Commonwealth.

The current debates around federal immigration policy, as well as the diversity of Massachusetts immigrants, also present opportunities. Massachusetts is poised to offer support and services to immigrant residents despite the inadequacies of the federal system (for a summary of the GAC's conclusions on federal immigration issues please see the "Federal Letter" in Appendix II of this report). Also the Commonwealth's ability to attract immigrants of all ages and backgrounds means higher rates of entrepreneurship, industry driving academic and technological achievement, and revitalization of aging cities and towns.

## The New Americans Agenda

In this spirit of opportunity and growth and in recognition of the need to invest in the future of the Commonwealth, Governor Patrick signed Executive Order No. 503 in July 2008, thus launching the New Americans Agenda. The NAA is a comprehensive statewide initiative to develop recommendations for the state to better integrate immigrants and refugees into the civic and economic life of the Commonwealth. This initiative was informed by the work of several other states which have recently undertaken similar integration-based strategies including Illinois, New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington. However, the model developed by the Commonwealth focused on a unique process of civic engagement, community involvement and active dialogue among state officials, municipal leaders, and policy experts.

During phase one of this initiative, the Governor's Advisory Council for Refugees and Immigrants (GAC) was charged with creating a set of policy recommendations to present to the Governor. To complete the enormous work of phase one the GAC worked in partnership with the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), the state agency responsible for immigrant and refugee policy and affairs, and the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), the Commonwealth's pre-eminent immigrant advocacy organization. The information for the report came from three sources: existing research, a series of topic specific policy meetings, and a series of six public meetings held across the state.

Throughout this process the GAC has relied on the input and assistance of community-based organizations. The state relies heavily on these organizations



to provide services, offer feedback, and support the success of communities. Therefore, many of the recommendations focus on improving the strength and diversity of partnerships between state agencies and community-based organizations.

The public meetings were organized and hosted by ten community-based organizations which worked throughout the year on both planning the meetings and becoming a well developed network, building their capacity as a group while building the capacity of their individual communities. These organizations included: Alliance to Develop Power (Springfield), Center for New Americans (North Hampton), Chelsea Collaborative (Chelsea), Community Economic Development Center (New Bedford), Immigrants Assistance Center (New Bedford), Irish Immigration Center (Boston), ONE Lowell (Lowell), ROCA (Chelsea), The Massachusetts Mutual Assistance Association Coalition, and Cleghorn Neighborhood Center (Fitchburg).

These organizations and their members and communities made the public meetings the highlight of the information gathering process. More than 1,200 immigrants, non-immigrant residents, state and local officials, and business leaders attended meetings held in Chelsea, Hyannis, New Bedford, Lowell, Springfield, and Fitchburg. Members of the Governor's Advisory Council heard personal stories, concerns, suggestions, and solutions about better immigrant integration. The meetings allowed individuals well versed in local issues to present, while also allowing time for anyone in attendance to share their individual concerns and desires. The meetings displayed the diversity of Massachusetts' immigrant population with participants from dozens of ethnic backgrounds.

The GAC heard testimony that expressed both the fears and hopes of the immigrant community and the community-at-large. Though the fear of detention and deportation was a continued theme— even among many who are legally present in this country— it has not prevented immigrants from succeeding in work and personal accomplishments. The community meetings raised stories of triumph, of successful immigrant entrepreneurship, of after school programs and English classes run by the immigrant community, and of successful partnerships among immigrant communities and the broader community. (For a list of the top concerns of the immigrant community expressed at these public meetings— see Table 1 in Appendix I.)

In order to balance the breadth of information presented at the public meetings with specific in-depth information on key topic areas, the NAA project also held a series of policy meetings. These meetings were a valuable source of diverse stakeholder engagement. More than 175 people from state agencies, policy organizations, business, municipal offices and community groups from across the state participated in two rounds of meetings on seven specific topics: public safety, housing, youth, health, economic/workforce development, education and civil rights. At the meetings, convened by ORI, participants established a vision for integration around their specific topic areas and then worked to list barriers to their goal and finally to generate solutions in the form of policy recommendations. The frameworks from these exchanges were forwarded to the GAC to consider as it finalized its recommendations.

*"I do have some emotion around how immigrants are treated" admits Genzyme vice-president Zoltan Csizma, referring to his childhood.*



*Zoltan Csizma*

*After the Second World War, Csizma's family, displaced from Hungary to Germany, resettled in California. Although his father, an engineering executive in his native Hungary, worked his way up at a local manufacturing plant from a machine operator to become a project engineer with a string of patents, he never earned more than a machinist's salary. "People didn't like having weird accents and other differences back then," Csizma explains.*

*Now, as chief human resource officer at the Massachusetts biopharmaceutical company which employs over 5,500 in Massachusetts, Csizma continues to see both opportunities and barriers for immigrants. At Genzyme, "there's a pretty good diversity of ethnicity," from lab technicians to top executives, "who've helped build the fourth or fifth biggest biotechnology company in the world." Yet immigration limitations test every high-tech organization. "There are certain people with certain skill sets that you want to be able to attract, and if there are not sufficient visas available, that's a real problem... Without a strong immigrant base here, I think companies like ours would have a greater struggle meeting our resource needs," he explains. "You know, we live in a global economy. And we should be able to tap the right people. And we should be able to do that effectively."*

*Immigrants,  
with an intimate  
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## Massachusetts - An Immigrant Portrait

The rich portrait of Massachusetts' immigrants presented by the public meetings was further enhanced by current demographic and economic information presented to the Governor's Advisory Council (GAC). These statistics highlight the growing size of the Massachusetts immigrant population as well as its many important contributions.

Immigrants play an essential role in providing the Commonwealth with both the current and future labor force that it needs to remain competitive in the world economy. By 2004, immigrants accounted for 1 in 6 of all workers in the Commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, immigrants represent a much younger population than the native born, making up 21.6 percent of the state's labor force between the ages of 25 and 44 in 2007.<sup>7</sup> This is notable since immigrants will be earning more income and paying more taxes even as a largely native-born baby boom generation grows older and therefore earns less and pays less in taxes.

In addition, immigrants contribute to the economic stability of the Commonwealth through their high propensity for saving, as demonstrated by their remittances back to their native countries of \$654 million of their savings in 2008.<sup>8</sup> Still more savings go each year to grow their businesses and support their families here in the Commonwealth.

Another essential immigrant contribution is the stabilization of population loss in the state. From 2000 to 2006, Massachusetts would have declined in overall population if not for the growth of its foreign-born population.<sup>9</sup> It is Massachusetts' ability to attract and retain immigrant residents which has allowed the state to maintain population numbers and by extension, substantial representation in Congress and access to vital, population-based federal funds.

Finally, it is vital to acknowledge the diversity in arts, languages, entertainment, food, traditions and other aspects of culture that immigrants bring to Massachusetts. Immigrants with an intimate understanding of diverse cultures and wide-ranging contacts can continue to enhance Massachusetts' ability to compete in a globalized economy. A summary of key immigrant statistics for the state, "Massachusetts' Immigrants by the Numbers", is available in the following section.<sup>10</sup>

# Massachusetts

## Immigrants by the Numbers

Demographic and Economic Footprint of Immigrants in Massachusetts, including all immigrants regardless of status



### Population

**912,310** immigrants lived in Massachusetts in 2007, comprising 14.1% of the state's population. From 2000 to 2006 Massachusetts suffered an out migration of 233,000 residents, a loss which has been made up primarily by the influx of immigrants.

**47.7%** of Massachusetts' foreign born were naturalized citizens in 2007.

**27.8%** of all persons in Boston are immigrants. Chelsea has the highest concentration of immigrants, followed, in order, by Malden, Lawrence, Everett, Lynn, and Cambridge.

**79%** or more of the immigrant population in Massachusetts is of working age, compared with only 61% of the native population.

**0.06%:** the incarceration rate for immigrant men in 2000—much lower than the native-born rate of 1.5%.

**22.8%** of all children in the Commonwealth have an immigrant parent.

**2.95:** the average number of persons living in an immigrant household. Native households have an average of 2.35 persons. (2007)

Since **2000**, most immigrants in Massachusetts have come from Latin America and Asia. Historically, the Commonwealth's immigrants were largely of European origins.

### Education and English Proficiency

**24%** of immigrants hold a master's degree or higher. Immigrants are more likely to have advanced degrees than the native born (16% for natives.) Also, immigrants comprise 50.3% of all PhD's residing in the state. At the same time, immigrants are also more likely to hold less than a high school degree, 25.2% compared to 8.7% for the native born.

**43%** of the immigrant population five years and older are unable to speak English "very well".

**The top 5** languages spoken in Massachusetts, after English, are Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, French, and Italian.

### Economic Circumstances

**17%** of the state's workforce is comprised of immigrants. In 2005, the average salary for immigrants was \$42,200 or 11.7% less than the native population.

**Property incomes** such as interests, dividends and retirement/pensions are appreciably lower among immigrants.

**14.5%** of immigrants were living below the poverty line in 2007, versus 11.1% of the native born and 32.4% of immigrants were living below 200% of the poverty line versus 22% of natives.

**654 million dollars:** the amount of savings immigrants in Massachusetts remitted to their home countries in 2008.

**Public assistance** income reliance is approximately the same among immigrants and the native born.

### Taxes

**16.4%** of the state income tax filers were immigrants in 2007. Immigrants paid \$1.2 billion in Massachusetts state income taxes.

**14.5%** of consumer spending was from immigrant-headed households in 2007. In addition, immigrant-headed households in Massachusetts paid \$1.06 billion in local property taxes in 2007, \$346 million in sales and excise taxes in 2006 or 14.5% of all receipts.

Citation: footnote no. 10. Massachusetts New Americans Agenda—Oct/2009



# Recommendations

The recommendations are presented by category; the categories were pulled primarily from the text of the Executive Order, with further categories developed during the course of the policy topic meetings and public meetings. The categories are presented in order of overall importance to integration, as decided by the Governor's Advisory Council. Although many recommendations cut across several categories, each is listed only once for purposes of clarity and brevity. The GAC is fully aware of the constraints of the current financial climate. Although some of the recommendations require increased funding, the main energy of the recommendations is about utilizing existing funds and programs in more effective and creative ways.

## Civil Rights

*In order to make the values of the Commonwealth a reality for all residents, it is imperative that all residents have knowledge of their rights...*

The preservation of individual rights and liberties is the very core of American democracy and a founding value of the Commonwealth. It is the utmost mission of the Commonwealth to ensure that all residents have lives of dignity, free from violation and abuse. Unfortunately immigrants are often the targets of abuse and discrimination in employment, housing, law enforcement, tax preparation, legal advice, and other areas. Many of these violations of civil rights come from a fundamental misunderstanding of complex federal immigration laws, leading individuals to incorrectly deny goods and services to qualified immigrants. Other violations have more sinister roots in racial, religious, and ethnic bias.

The Commonwealth has already taken some important steps in recent years under the Patrick Administration to ensure that all residents have equal opportunity and protection from discrimination. In January 2007, Governor Patrick signed Executive Order No. 478 to establish a non-discrimination and equal opportunity policy for all state agencies and programs. In 2008, the Patrick Administration also appointed an Assistant Secretary for Access and Opportunity within the Executive Office for Administration and Finance to guide and monitor state agencies' plans for non-discrimination and diversity policies.

In order to make the values of the Commonwealth a reality for all residents, it is imperative that all residents have knowledge of their rights and the opportunity to enforce those rights when violated. These recommendations are an effort to improve access to enforcement mechanisms, increase awareness of rights within the immigrant community, and highlight areas of law and regulation in need of improvement.





### Recommendations

- Per Executive Order No. 478, ensure that non-discrimination, diversity, and equal opportunity are safeguarded, promoted, and reflected by increasing the representation of persons from the immigrant community on state advisory boards and commissions.
- Support the full implementation of Executive Order No. 478 on non-discrimination and equal opportunity by encouraging the state's Human Resources Division to channel more resources to outreach in immigrant communities to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.
- Support the proposed state Act to Restore Enforcement of Civil Rights, (Senate Bill 1688) which would allow individuals to challenge policies and activities of the government that have the effect of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex.
- Establish a firm policy against racial, ethnic, and religious profiling by law enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth and restore the previously empanelled advisory board on racial profiling. Require that police departments record each stop, including the name, age, race and reason for the stop (as advocated for juveniles in Senate Bill 940). This data should be available publicly without the names to protect the privacy of the individuals involved, and aggregated yearly to see trends. State funds should be linked to the implementation of this policy.
- Reinforce and re-issue the State Police policy against the confiscation of foreign identity documents.
- Improve Limited English Proficient (LEP) victims and witnesses access to victim services, victim witness advocates, and court translators, as well as outreach and education about available U and T visas for immigrant victims of trafficking or other forms of criminal violence.
- Issue state detention standards to supplement the federal standards and regulate fair treatment for immigration detainees housed in state and local correctional facilities.
- Increase funding for legal services available to immigrants. In addition, increase the funding for the Committee for Public Counsel Services Immigration Impact Unit, to enable better training of attorneys on the interaction between criminal and immigration proceedings.
- Support legislation requiring any non-attorney who advertises as a notary public or "notario publico" to include a disclosure stating that the person is not an attorney, with criminal penalties for individuals who fail to do so or who accept payment for legal advice. This legislation should include outreach mechanisms such as a multilingual guide on fraud, workshops and a hotline to report fraud.<sup>34</sup>

**W**hen Ahmed Abou-Dawood left Cairo in 1999, he looked more Westernized than he does now, a change that began after September 11. "I started being more involved with the community, with Muslim organizations," he explains. "Little by little, I became more grounded in my faith. It had a reflection . . . on my personal development and my external appearance, dressing more modestly in compliance with my faith, and little by little wearing a long beard."

Somewhere, one of those increments crossed a line. In early 2007, on a trip to Canada, Abou-Dawood was stopped for a random border search that lasted four hours. Since then, every time he's traveled or dealt with the police, he has had trouble. Once, when stopped by a Massachusetts state trooper, Abou-Dawood overheard the officer talking about "the list" over his radio. Another time he was told by a customs agent at JFK airport, "Well I'm just a middle man. There are other agencies that we're filling in the forms for."

The searches are more intense when Abou-Dawood travels with his wife, who wears a full hijab and veil, and when he flies from Boston. "In Logan airport it's very personal and discriminatory," he says. "They'll go out of their way to make things more difficult for you."

Even so, the longer that he's stayed, the more he's come to identify as a Bostonian. "As much as I have Egyptian culture in me, I also have American culture in me," he says. It was therefore only natural that Abou-Dawood applied for U.S. citizenship last year. He received his letter with a test and interview date in February. He went, took the test and returned home and has not heard from Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) since. According to CIS the case is still under review.

## Adult English Language Proficiency

*English proficiency is the foundation for integration and for building a skilled workforce and healthy communities.*



English language proficiency is the single greatest challenge to integration for most of the Commonwealth's foreign-born population. The ability to communicate in English allows adults and families to more easily understand American culture, society and its laws and traditions. It also helps foreign-born individuals achieve citizenship, access services, self-advocate and communicate more productively with neighbors, government officials, businesses, and service providers.

English language proficiency is an essential step for foreign-born individuals towards economic self-sufficiency, educational attainment, and professional advancement. The 2005 Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth (MassINC) publication entitled "The Changing Face of Massachusetts," reports on average that an immigrant who speaks only English at home earns 2.5 times as much as an immigrant who does not speak English well.<sup>11</sup> According to this same MassINC report, less than 8% of Limited English Proficient (LEP) immigrants hold professional, management level jobs— compared to 35% of immigrants with higher levels of English proficiency.<sup>12</sup> It is in the social and economic interest of the state to promote and ensure greater English language proficiency of foreign-born residents.

The importance of English language proficiency for immigrants is clearly demonstrated by the overwhelming desire and demand for adult English language classes that are offered across Massachusetts in a variety of formal and informal settings. The current system does not provide an adequate number of classes and many that are offered are frequently inaccessible to immigrants because of transportation, employment, and/or childcare needs. It is estimated that the current demand for English classes exceeds the existing supply by at least 16,000 students.<sup>13</sup>

The Commonwealth should prioritize the elimination of this backlog for English classes by increasing its investment in this system and by leveraging additional support to build more partnerships for providing English language classes through private enterprises and nonprofit organizations.

English proficiency is the foundation for integration and for building a skilled workforce and healthy communities. While we recognize the priceless and inherent cultural value of the dozens of languages new arrivals bring to Massachusetts, we must also ensure that access to learning English be easier and more effective if we are to build a skilled, dynamic workforce prepared for the global economy. This section addresses recommendations for Adult English Language Proficiency. Recommendations for children are addressed in the Education section.

## Recommendations

- Increase the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (ESE) funding for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to begin the process of bringing the state's responsibility for ABE to a level recommended by the Governor's Transition Team, including funding for:
  - Family literacy
  - Workplace based instruction
  - Vocational/career pathway ESOL classes
  - More classes offered during evenings and weekends
- Create a statewide task force focused on the elimination of the current backlog for English classes in Massachusetts.
- Explore sources for more funding, including but not limited to:
  - Labor law violation fines
  - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
  - Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund usage
  - Business tax incentives for workplace ESOL
  - Education cost sharing programs
- Develop and support effective models for ESOL bridge-to-college programs.
- Develop ABE curricula which are geared towards specific careers or career advancement opportunities.
- Provide college credits for ESOL classes taken at community colleges.
- Support full implementation of the Dedicated Fund for workplace ABE/ESOL, as recommended by the Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD).
- Initiate an active marketing campaign about the importance of employer contributions to ESOL, showcasing successful models and available resources.
- Incorporate education about civic engagement and civic responsibility into adult ESOL curricula.
- Inform Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents about the availability of ESOL classes through their interaction with public schools.
- Fund a survey of non-state funded ESOL programs across the state to track outcomes, services, populations served, and other relevant data.

**S**ince he left Haiti in 1992, Senel Mauricette has taken different jobs to support his family, but he has always dreamed of becoming a teacher in the United States, as he was in Haiti. Last year he took his first step toward that goal.

He enrolled in English classes through the Citizenship for New Americans Program, a successful statewide program which assists immigrants in preparing for citizenship. He drove over an hour from his home in Leominster to the classes in Boston, at the Haitian American Public Health Initiative.

He wanted to become a citizen, not only to better his own future, he says, but "to serve the country" and "to help my community". After months of hard work and support from his teacher, he passed the citizenship exam and became a U.S. citizen.

Now he dedicates time to volunteering at the citizenship program, filling in when the teacher is out and tutoring other students. Although he is not teaching full time, he is able to support the community and share his love of learning by "helping (students) learn like I did before".

He credits the program with his citizenship and his English, saying he "really appreciates all (his teacher) did" for him. He looks forward to working with many more students and using his English to start the process of becoming a certified teacher.

## Economic Development

*As immigrants learn to navigate a new language, culture, and financial system, their earning potential and readiness to seize economic opportunities will increase.*



Immigrants already make substantial contributions to the Massachusetts economy through their entrepreneurship, technology and science-based skills and connections to the global economy. Immigrants are also a young population and as baby boomers begin to retire, immigrant workers will continue to sustain and even grow the state's labor force. Their importance to Massachusetts' current and future economy cannot be over-emphasized and should be recognized in the comments and actions of the state government. Consider these research findings:

- Immigrants are founders in 25.7 percent of Massachusetts biotechnology firms.<sup>14</sup> In 2006, these firms generated over \$7.6 billion in sales and employed over 4,000 workers.<sup>15</sup>
- The number of businesses in Massachusetts whose proprietors are Asian, primarily immigrant, increased 44 percent between 1997 and 2002, compared with a 5 percent overall business growth rate.<sup>16</sup>
- Immigrant storefront businesses continue to revitalize depressed neighborhoods and cities throughout Massachusetts.<sup>17</sup>
- Immigrants are developing transnational businesses at an increasing rate and have cultural know-how that is strengthening the state's ability to compete in a global economy.<sup>18</sup>
- Immigrants have demonstrated impressive savings abilities with 45 percent of Massachusetts immigrants remitting funds to their families abroad.<sup>19</sup>

However, research has also shown that there is a significant gap between immigrant entrepreneurs at all levels and publically available business services. In addition, asset building opportunities for immigrant households for homes, businesses, and education have been severely weakened by the current economy. Many immigrant communities also lack the institutional infrastructure and know-how required to grow new economic opportunities.

As immigrants learn to navigate a new language, culture and financial system, their earning potential and readiness to seize economic opportunities will increase. This in turn will increase their tax payments, consumer spending and lessen use of public benefits. In 2005, immigrant households were over 16 percent of state income tax filers, paying in \$1.2 billion.<sup>20</sup> Immigrant households also paid 14.5 percent of Massachusetts sales and excise tax receipts.<sup>21</sup>



### Recommendations

- The Governor and his Cabinet should regularly promote the economic contributions of immigrant-owned businesses, workers and consumers throughout the Commonwealth.
- Strengthen and expand opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs and small businesses by:
  - Improving access to state and federal procurement systems, and encouraging consideration of minority and multilingual-run businesses in the contracting and procurement process;
  - Improving access to capital including micro-enterprise loan programs;
  - Partnering with local community-based organizations, private sector entities as well as chambers of commerce across the state to provide multilingual individual technical assistance, mentoring and support groups in such areas as business planning, credit building, marketing, and accounting.
  - Providing incentives to encourage utilization of immigrant savings on projects based in the Commonwealth.
- Provide access to financial information and resources by:
  - Delivering financial education programs for immigrants about such topics as safe banking, building credit, affordable financial services, earned income, and other tax credits;
  - Developing a working group to connect to the Massachusetts Division of Banks and the FDIC “Alliance for Economic Inclusion” for improved banking services and lending practices for immigrants. This includes accepting alternative forms of identification as well as marketing and special outreach in immigrant communities;
  - Providing savings incentives to promote the creation of federal and state “Individual Development Accounts” (IDAs) with special attention to micro-finance models.

Six months ago, Tomas Xirum fulfilled a typical immigrant dream—and a quintessential American one—opening his first business in the United States.

His Latino music and apparel store, *International Guatemalan Musical*, required an initial personal investment of over \$20,000, earned through years of working double and triple shifts at menial jobs. Like many American entrepreneurs, his motivation was simple. “I don’t want to work anymore for others,” says the New Bedford businessman. “I want to work for myself.”

The road to Xirum’s common dream, however, was uncommonly hard. When Xirum was a young boy, his father and then grandmother were killed in Guatemala’s civil war, leaving Tomas and his four siblings to fend for themselves. By around seven, he began working any job he could find, including street vending. At 18, Xirum managed to flee to the U.S., eventually joining relatives in New Bedford, which includes a thriving Guatemalan population. He decided on the apparel and music store, he says, simply because the city lacked a place to pick up the latest styles in boots or music from Central America. The response has been positive, even if it hasn’t translated into major sales. “If people had money it would be better,” he says.

As Xirum sees the situation, the problem is political as much as economic. “If the immigration system is fixed for everyone, it will be a great advantage,” he explains. “Now there are a lot of people here, but they’re without documents, and it’s hard for them to get jobs. Also, bosses abuse them: they don’t pay them overtime; they don’t pay them holidays; they make them work Saturdays and Sundays. All people want is a little money— they don’t mind working— but they should have their legal benefits and not be discriminated against.”